Extension Bulletin E-1605 October 1982

Creating A Travel Brochure That Sells

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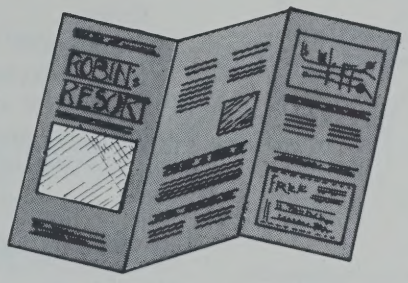
Most tourism-related businesses are interested in having a brochure that will attract more customers. A well planned and designed brochure can indeed increase business, but all too many brochures are a waste of money. They are either so poorly designed that they actually drive potential customers away, or so poorly distributed that they never reach the right people.



Any advertising, including brochures, should be a part of the total marketing plan for a business. If your marketing strategy determines that tourism brochures are an effective method for reaching your target audience, then carefully design the best brochure possible.

What Do You Want the Brochure to Do?

Before making any decisions about content or appearance, ask yourself what you want the brochure to do. Your ultimate goal is to increase profits. Your brochure can do this by focusing on a specific objective. One objective might be to *announce* the addition of a new service to your potential customers. Another objective could be to *remind* past customers of the services and facilities you already provide. A brochure can also *introduce* people to your facility and the services you offer. It can let them know how easy it is to reach you. Another objective might be to tell people about a special *bargain* you are offering.

Who is Your Audience?

Once you know the purpose of your brochure, you need to determine your audience. What type of people are you trying to attract? How old are they? Where do they live? What do they enjoy doing? How much will they spend? How do you reach them?

You can get some of this information by studying the people you currently attract. Survey guest registers, license plates and customer credit card receipts. Carefully observe guests and pay attention to casual conversation. You may want to start by asking your current customers to sign their names and addresses in a guest book. This will give you a ready mailing list and an idea of where potential customers live. The same can be accomplished by looking through your copies of customer credit card receipts. You can learn additional information about your guests by simply keeping your eyes and ears open.

How Do You Reach Them?

A major problem is getting brochures into the hands of the right people. It is relatively easy to design and print a brochure. It is much more difficult to effectively distribute it. Remember, the cost of distributing travel brochures is often as much or more than the cost of designing and printing them. Carefully plan how your brochures will reach your potential customers. Consider the quantity needed and the cost of distribution.

The following list includes ideas on where to distribute travel brochures.

- Past guests.
- People who have written for information.
- Selected travel agents—Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, AAA.
- Labor unions — recreation division.
- Corporations — recreation division.
- Highway information booths.
- Local businesses.
- Sport shops and vacation equipment dealers where past guests live.
- Special groups—clubs of all kinds (especially travel clubs), churches, teacher groups, senior citizens, sport clubs, credit unions, banks.
- Chambers of commerce.
- Travel and sport shows.
- County and regional tourist associations.
- Transportation companies.
- Restaurants.
- Motels, hotels, campgrounds.
- Gas stations.
- Tourist attractions
- Michigan Travel Bureau.

Paint A Pretty Picture Of Your Place

Now, to the brochure itself—your sales representative. In the eyes of the viewer, the brochure paints a picture of

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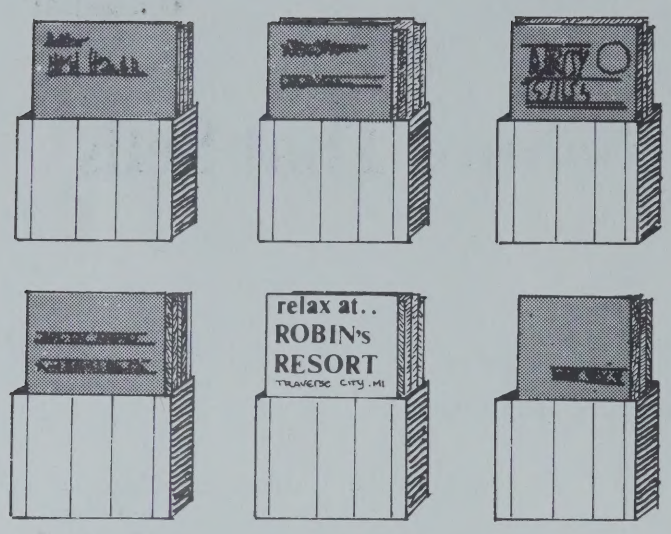


The cover of the brochure must attract attention and make people curious enough so that they will want to look inside.

your business and its services. The image the brochure projects will influence how people perceive your facilities. A poor quality brochure projects your business as second rate. A high quality, professional brochure will create a positive image. The key words here are "high quality" and "professional." Let a skilled professional help you develop the highest quality brochure possible.

Do your homework. Look at ads in the travel section of newspapers and magazines. Study the brochures of other travel facilities. Which ones catch your eye? Try to visualize your brochure in a display rack. Will it stand out and be noticed or become lost in a sea of color?

A successful brochure *opens* the sale, *expands* customer interest, and *closes* the sale by creating customer action. The cover of the brochure is the sales opener. It must attract attention and present a visual image of the product being sold.

The inside pages expand the customer's interest. Show how the customer benefits and answer as many potential questions as possible.

The last paragraph or two of the copy should close the sale by asking for action. Ask the reader to call for open dates or reservations, or write for more information or price quotes. Get the reader to make some type of commitment that could make the reader a customer of your services.

The Cover

The cover is the most important page of any brochure. A cover must attract the attention of potential customers, develop the theme of the brochure, and make people curious enough that they will want to see what is inside. A simple, uncluttered cover with a single message is desirable.

The brochure's cover should answer the following questions at a glance:

1. The name of the business.
2. The location of the business.
3. The product or service being sold.

Research has shown that the first focal point on a page is one-third of the way down from the top and slightly to the left. The name, location, and product or service is usually best displayed in the top one-third of the page. This prevents this information from being blocked out if the brochure is displayed in a rack. The remaining two-thirds should present a visual image of the product.

The first line of the cover can be used for "thought lead-ins." Thought lead-ins help the readers visualize themselves sharing in the travel adventure depicted in the brochure. They should be specific and descriptive.

By using "yes" factors, such as the following:

Enjoy . . . . . .
Vacation at . . . . . .
Join the excitement at . . . . . .
Prepare for action . . . . . .

the reader is encouraged to think about your facilities. They have the feeling of actually experiencing your place.

The Inside Pages

While being consistent with the theme of the cover page, the inside pages should describe the benefits gained by using your service. People are not as interested in a product's features as they are in how the features will benefit them. The following information also applies to a one page, front/back only brochure. The same message must be presented, but in briefer form.

Convert the features of your service into benefits for the customer. You are not selling a ticket on a boat trip, but an opportunity to see wild game along the shore and enjoy pretty sites without having to walk or drive.

Features — "What it does, how it's operated, what it's made of, how it's used."

Benefits — "What will this product do for this customer?"

Focus on what the customer is interested in, and make the sales message personal. You know who your potential customers are. You may not know their names, but you do know where they live, what they like to do, their ages, etc.

Write the sales message as though you were describing the benefits of your product to a friend. When writing the copy, it may be helpful to put a picture of a friend on the desk beside you. Write the copy as if you were talking to that person. Tell them what they want to hear.

Promote customer benefits that are unique to your facility. What distinguishes your facility from others in your area? Why should someone come to your place of business?

Look at your facility through the eyes of the customer. What are the most outstanding features of your facility? What do you do best that people will remember long after they leave? Why should a customer recommend your business to friends?

The fact that your facility has 12 modern units is not an outstanding feature. Instead, the customer is more likely to remember your terrific personality, that your facility is within walking distance of three major attractions, or that you offer a babysitting service. Look at your business from the customer's vantage point.

Put your best foot forward. If you do not present your strongest selling points first, you may lose your readers' attention before you persuade them to buy.

Get to the point. Be brief. Use short sentences. Anticipate as many questions potential guests may have as possible. Use pictures to emphasize the main benefits you can provide. Include close-up pictures of people enjoying your facilities. Do not include pictures of cars, faddish clothing styles and other scenes that will quickly outdate your brochure. Pictures should tell the story with just enough copy to support the message you are trying to communicate.

Brochures should contain the following basic information in roughly this order:

1. **Main Product**
   Carefully explain your facilities. For example, cabins (with or without electricity?), kitchen facilities, motel rooms, hotel rooms, type of heat (individual room control?) TV, pool (heated? indoor?), restaurant (family style? gourmet? number of seats?), length of tour, size of facility, size of inventory, etc.

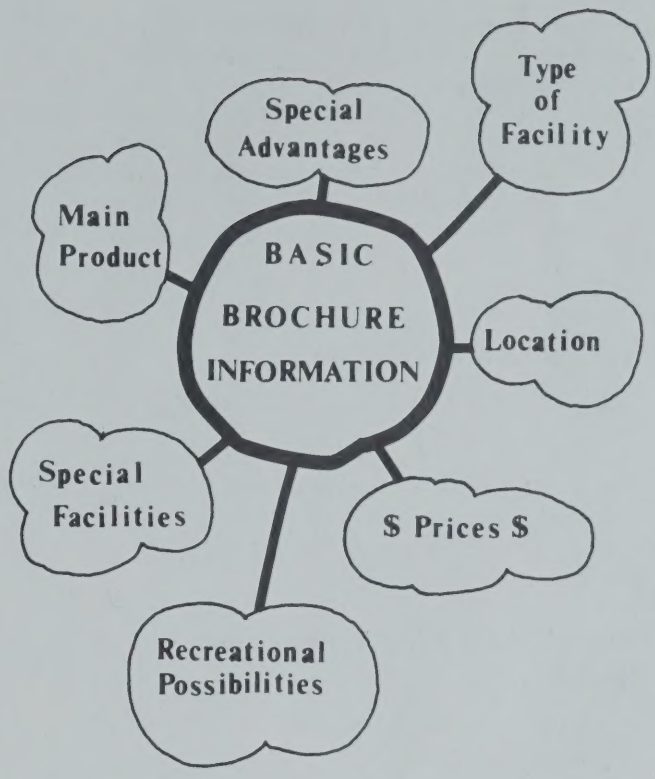
2. **Special Advantages**
   Describe special advantages your business offers to its guests: nightly movies, live bands on weekends, peace and quiet, located on a class A trout stream, within walking distance of three major attractions, plenty of free parking, family dining, marina adjacent, shopping nearby, buses welcome.

3. **Type of Facility**
   Describe the general age of your guests, whether your business is seasonal or year round, and your special emphasis—skiing, fishing, snowmobiling, history, seafood, etc.

4. **Recreational Possibilities**
   Include all recreation and entertainment facilities on your property as well as other public and private facilities nearby. Be sure to mention historical sites, sporting events, plays, pageants, festivals, parades, etc.

5. **Specal Facilities**
   a. Children—playgrounds, swimming, child care, planned activities, game rooms, children's menu.
   b. Senior Citizens—game rooms, elevators, planned activities, senior citizen discounts.
   c. Handicappers—ramps, railings, wide doorways, restrooms, etc.

6. **Location**
   Make it easy for potential customers to find your facility. Include your mailing address (city and state), telephone number and area code. A line-drawn map showing major highways and a listing of distances from major populaton centers is generally the best method of indicating where you are. Be sure your map is accurate and easily read. Mention the fact that you are near a major city or located in the Upper Peninsula. Is your facility on a nearby highway or in a remote location?



Although every travel brochure is different, they all must contain some basic information.

1. **Prices**
   Don't print prices in the brochure itself. Instead, list prices on a separate piece of paper that can be inserted into your brochure. This makes it easier and less expensive to change your prices. Be sure to include prices of extra charge services such as boat and motor rental, baby-sitting, or green fees.

   On a one-page, front/back only brochure, print prices on only one side. This will reduce printing costs when you have the brochure reprinted, since copy will only have to be changed on one side.

The Back Section

If you designed your brochure carefully, with the cover attracting interest and the inside pages creating desire, then the last section should close the sale. Make your readers take action! Tell them what they should do to enjoy the benefits you have described. Ask them to make a reservation by April 15, or clip the coupon and return it

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for more information. Make the reader an offer he/she can't refuse—"reservations made by May 31 receive a 10 percent discount."

After you have told the readers what to do, give them follow-through directions. Your phone number and address are necessities. A tear-out coupon is good, but don't put a map on the back of it. Place the map in the brochure so it will be retained and used in getting to your place.

Ask for the sale!!

Printing Considerations

Above all else, you want a quality brochure. Full color is desirable, if your pocketbook allows. However, a good quality brochure with one or two colors is better than a poor quality four-color brochure. By using colored paper, contrasting inks, screening, and other techniques, you can brighten up your brochure, but at a much lower cost than with four-color.

A clip-out coupon is one method to get the reader to take action.

Points to Remember in Designing a Good Brochure

a. Keep it simple and uncluttered. Have more open space than ink.
b. Be different, if possible.
c. Full color is best.
d. Build an image through pictures and factual information.
e. Stress quality.
f. Remember your target audience.
g. Stick to one selling message.

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Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Gordon E. Guyer, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

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